

Application No.: 10/717330

Docket No.: TOW-050

REMARKS

Applicants amend claim 1 and add claim 11. Support for the amendment can be found throughout the specification and at least at Figs. 1 and 9 and corresponding text. Applicants thank the Examiner for allowing claims 4-10. Upon entry of this amendment, claims 1-11 are pending, of which claims 1 and 4 are independent. Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims define over the art of record.

Objection to the Specification

The specification is objected to due to minor informality. Applicants amend the specification to address the Examiner's concern. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the objection to the specification.

Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over United States Patent No. 6,686,080 to Farkash et. al. (hereafter "Farkash") in view of United States Patent No. 6,727,013 to Wheat et al. (hereafter "Wheat"). Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of the Farkash reference and the Wheat reference do not teach or suggest the limitation that a power generation circuit has a plurality of loads, wherein each fuel cell is connected to a corresponding one of the plurality of loads. The combination of the prior art references also do not teach or suggest a switching mechanism for selectively disconnecting one or more of said fuel cells from said corresponding one of said plurality of loads of said power generation circuit to stop generating electrical energy.

The Farkash Reference

The Farkash reference teaches that heating elements are connected to an electrical power supply to maintain the temperature of an end plate at the operating temperature of the fuel cell stack. See Col. 10, lines 41-46. The Farkash reference further teaches that the entire fuel cell stack may be connected to an external load. See Fig. 2. However, the Farkash reference does not teach or suggest that each fuel cell in the fuel cell stack is connected to a corresponding load that

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can be selectively disconnected to stop generation of electrical energy, as required by amended claim 1.

The Wheat Reference

The Examiner cites the Wheat reference to show that switches can be employed to connect or disconnect the fuel cell stack 102 from various loads. However, the Wheat reference merely teaches various loads that are connected to the entire fuel cell stack and not to the individual fuel cell. Hence, the combination of the Wheat reference and the Farkash reference do not teach or suggest that each fuel cell in the fuel cell stack is connected to a corresponding load that can be selectively disconnected to stop generation of electrical energy, as required by amended claim 1.

Applicants note that the dependent claims also recite patentable subject matter. As such, for this and the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that the dependent claims also define over the art of record.

New Claim

Dependent claim 11 is added. Claim 11 further recites a separate heating mechanism for heating a coolant that is supplied to the fuel cells. Neither the Farkash reference nor the Wheat reference teach or suggest such a limitation.

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CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendment, Applicants believe the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Applicants believe no fee is due with this statement. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 12-0080, under Order No. TOW-050 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

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Respectfully submitted,

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